



Erin Kelley-Gedisch/Goldstream News Gazette

Carlena Downden has created hundreds of ornaments for a Christmas craft sale this weekend at the Luxton Hall in Langford

## Crafts for canines

Girl aims to help SPCA at Luxton Hall craft fair

Erin Kelley-Gedisch  
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When 10-year-old Carlena Downden met BJ – a cocker spaniel with glaucoma – at the SPCA, she couldn't get the dog out of her mind.

Instead of feeling sorry for the pooch, she decided to convert her feelings into action.

After spending many holidays making crafts with her mother and grandmother, Downden felt she had a marketable skill.

Armed with scissors, a hot glue gun and the hopes of helping BJ, the Victoria student embarked on a craft-making frenzy. She wanted to raise enough money to pay for BJ's eye surgery.

Despite a hectic schedule with school, Girl Guides, gymnastics and swimming lessons, Downden found time to make hundreds of Christmas ornaments and decorations.

Every weekend for a month leading up to Christmas, Downden sold her wares at craft fairs around the city.

"I just drove her to the craft fairs and helped her set up," her mother Anne-Margaret said. "This was all entirely her will."

A poster board with BJ's photo hung behind her table as Downden enthusiastically explained her mission to every curious shopper.

After paying her mother back for supplies, Downden earned \$1,500.

Anne-Margaret said she asked her daughter if she wanted to buy herself anything with part of the earnings. Carlena said her bicycle was too small, but she didn't want to compromise BJ's surgery by spending any of the profits.

Although Downden forfeited her own desires for an animal in need at the time,

Downden won a new bicycle in a draw one day before Christmas.

Downden said when she went to visit BJ after the surgery, the dog rested his head on her lap and didn't want to leave her side.

"I didn't believe I could make such a difference," she said.

Downden is back working the craft fair circuit this holiday season, hoping to raise \$2,000 this year for the SPCA.

"It's sad that the animals can't be in a warm, cozy home," she said.

While Downden said she doesn't want to be a veterinarian anymore, claiming it's a "phase" most kids go through, her compassion for animals has not diminished.

"Animals can't speak for themselves. I want to be their voice," she said.

Downden will be selling her Christmas decorations this weekend at the Luxton Hall, 1040 Marwood Rd. in Langford.

Thirty tables are expected to be set up for the Dec. 10-11 event.

Event organizer Coleen Minnow said admission is free. However she encourages shoppers to bring donations for the West Shore community food bank.

Minnow, like Downden, hopes to raise funds to make living with disease a little easier. However, it's not a dog she is raising funds for and it's not an illness that surgery can fix. Minnow, 32, has fibromyalgia and has not worked for three years.

"I'm not embarrassed and I don't want pity," she said. "People in craft shows are enterprising. We take pride in our work."

Minnow is more excited about taking a truckload of food to the food bank after the craft fair than she is about earning enough money make her rent next month.

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CARLENA  
**DOWNDEN**  
craft maker

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